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Broadening Horizons

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Broadening Horizons

Home after two years as a co-ed at the University of Nebraska, Agnes again boarded the caboose of the freight train with the other young school ma'ams from Shenandoah, headed for Yorktown, in Page County. She had been appointed superintendent of the Yorktown public schools. Her new duties were to take charge of administrative affairs and to teach ninth and tenth grades. One year she taught the eleventh grade, also.

Her exciting student days at the university had opened new avenues for exploration. She determined to pass on to her high school pupils her thrilling discoveries, and each week she carried back and forth a suitcase full of books lent by the Shenandoah Public Library. She shared with her classes her recent studies in the fields of astronomy, botany and literature. She was eager for these boys and girls to become interested in the earth and sky, and to acquire good reading habits.

The Yorktown board of education co-operated by providing new library, laboratory and other instructional facilities. When the need of a microscope was mentioned, one board member is said to have declared: "I don't know a microscope

from a shotgun but if she needs one for her work, get it for the school. I didn't have a chance to get an education, but I want our kids to have good schooling."

Following the custom of the times, Miss Samuelson wrote mottoes and Bible verses on her blackboards for the pupils to memorize. Her classes became particularly interested in poetry, and each Friday morning recited their favorite selections at the opening exercises. One of the high school girls even pinned copies of verses on kitchen cabinets and memorized them as she washed the dishes. Thus they learned famous quotations from Tennyson, Lowell, Longfellow, Whittier and many others. No one considered such pleasant activity a chore.

In this teaching schedule also were included the cultivation of a small garden, the organization of a literary society, a program of flag etiquette, and the orientation of a foreign student.

The foreign student was from Sweden. What a friend Agnes Samuelson must have been to him. Here was someone who could speak his language and who could brief each classroom on his personal and educational qualifications. All of the pupils were prepared to receive him cordially and to help him in every possible way. He could not speak English.

As he stood in line with the primary pupils, he asked shyly, "Hvad skall jag göra med min

mössa?" ("What shall I do with my cap?") The teacher translated and the children showed the newcomer where to hang his cap. Before long the boy from Sweden had advanced through the eighth grade, learning English rapidly.

Agnes Samuelson served as superintendent of the Yorktown schools from 1913 to 1915. Then she campaigned for the office of superintendent of the Page County schools, visiting every school board in the county, driving over muddy roads in spring, and snow-packed roads in winter. Petitions were filed with the county convention of school board delegates from teachers and other friends over the county.

When her Yorktown pupils, teacher associates and other friends received word that Miss Samuelson had been named by the county school board convention as the next superintendent of schools for Page county, they planned a very special welcoming reception for her return. As she stepped from the train, after the meeting in Clarinda, the county seat, *everyone* was at the station. A high school spokesman, Dorman Morsman, greeted her with the announcement that she was not to walk, but to ride in grand style through the town.

With other admirers, he escorted her to an old two-wheeled cart without shafts or poles. Primary pupils were on hand to pull the ancient vehicle through the streets with a long rope. Who cares for a ticker-tape parade in New York? Here was

a thrilling homecoming for the new superintendent. Even the train was held in the station for a few moments, so that the passengers could enjoy this joyous demonstration.

Her eight years' experience in small schools intensified Miss Samuelson's interest in graded and ungraded schools. Her new position as county superintendent gave her a broader perspective regarding the place of rural education in the total educational program. It also had provided contacts with schools in rural, town and city school districts. For the next eight years — 1915-1923 — one of her goals was stressing the interrelation of rural and urban education. She also looked forward to real adventuring on behalf of small schools.

During the summer following her appointment as County Superintendent, Agnes Samuelson did not sit at home, counting the days until her new duties would begin. To prepare herself more fully for her new responsibilities, she attended summer school at the George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, Tennessee. Her associates were other teachers particularly interested in rural education on county, state and college levels. During this summer period, Miss Samuelson also took courses in school health problems and in administration of vocational education.

She has described this particular era in her educational career as "putting a telescope to one eye to gain a broader perspective and deeper insight

into rural education and its place in the American scene, and placing a microscope to the other eye for practical helps which had proven effective elsewhere."

The official duties of the County Superintendent are prescribed by the Code of Iowa and are revised by the Iowa Legislature from time to time. The supervision of the county school system was a full-time assignment for the new County Superintendent. Among her responsibilities were the interpretation of school laws; the planning of county teachers' institutes; conducting eighth grade examinations and grading the papers; issuing high school tuition certificates and compiling an annual statistical report to the State Department of Public Instruction. Her office, in the Clarinda Courthouse, was open six days a week. Saturday was an especially busy day. "Never a dull moment," she recalls.

Then there were the school visits. The Code of Iowa required the county superintendent to visit each rural district at least once a year. Since there were about 120 one-room schools in operation in Page county, Miss Samuelson tried to visit all of these by the holiday season. Then she visited as many town schools as possible in the winter. In the spring she made trips to districts with new teachers or those who needed special help. She tried to make her visits in pleasant weather when she could avoid mud or snow drifts.

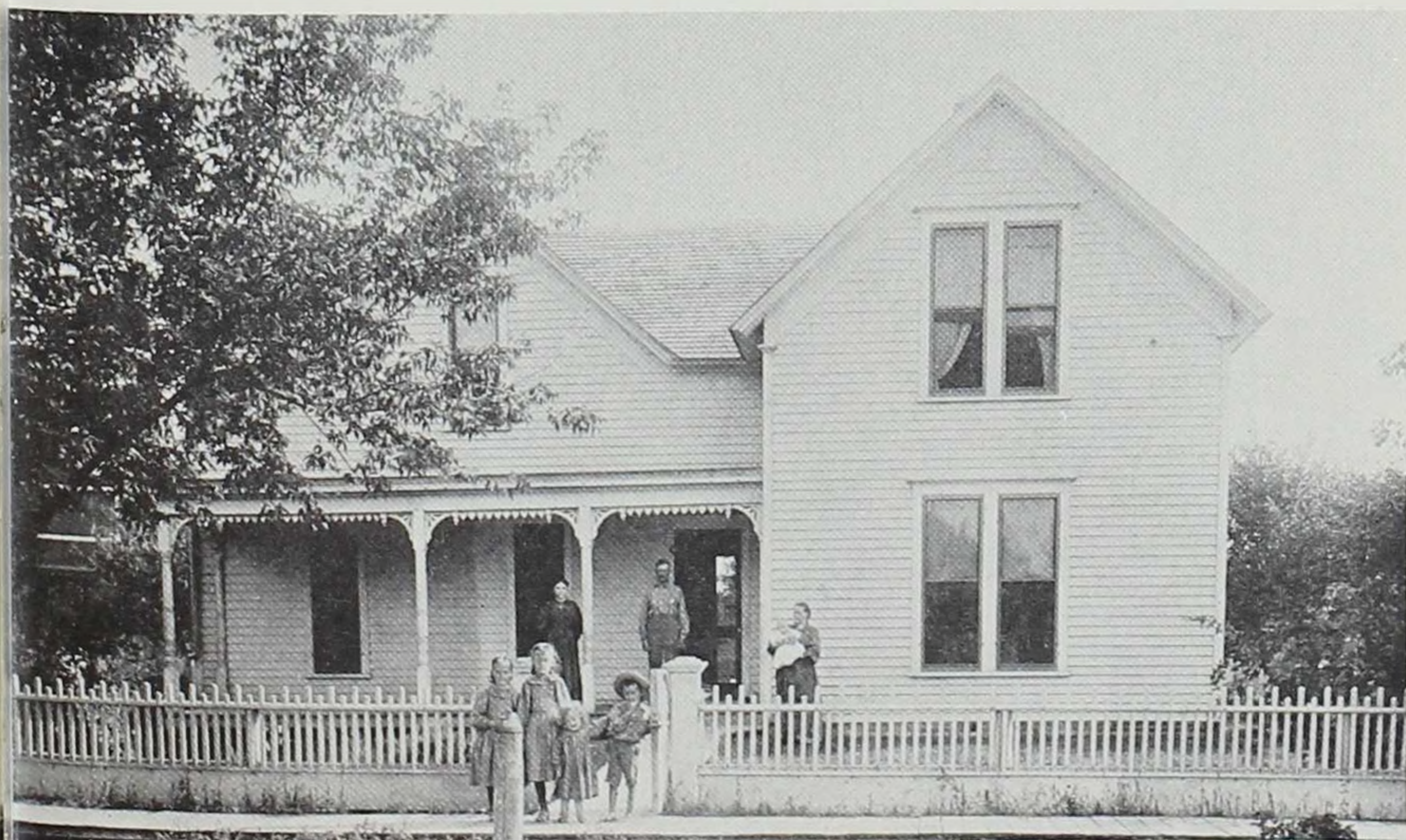
Log Cabin near Lockridge, built by Agnes Samuelson's grandfather in 1869.



Wedding picture of August and Mathilda Samuelson, parents of the educator.



Home of the Samuelson family in Shenandoah. Mabel, Ellen, Frank, and Carl are in the foreground. John is in his mother's arms. Father and a family friend are on the porch.



EARLY DAYS IN SHENANDOAH

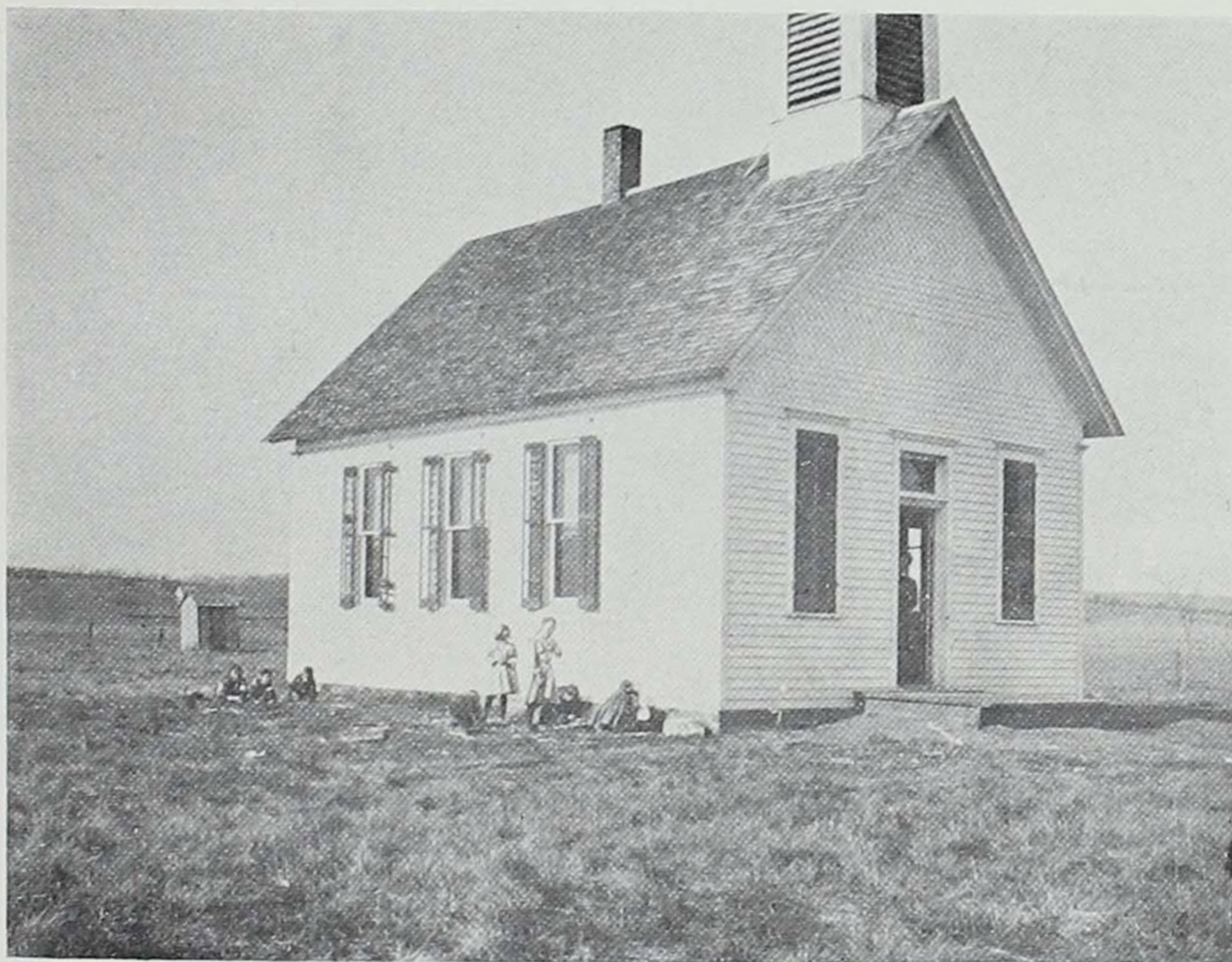


Here are Baby Agnes Samuelson; the pretty little school girl; and the sweet girl graduate from Shenandoah High School in 1904.



Looking prim and proper, Agnes Samuelson is seated, fourth from the right, in this picture with public school friends in 1898 or 1899. Her teacher, Miss May Grabill, is seated second from the left.

INTO THE TEACHING FIELD



This is Pleasant View School where Agnes Samuelson taught her first pupils in 1905 and 1906.



Miss Samuelson, right, was principal of the Page Center School in 1907.



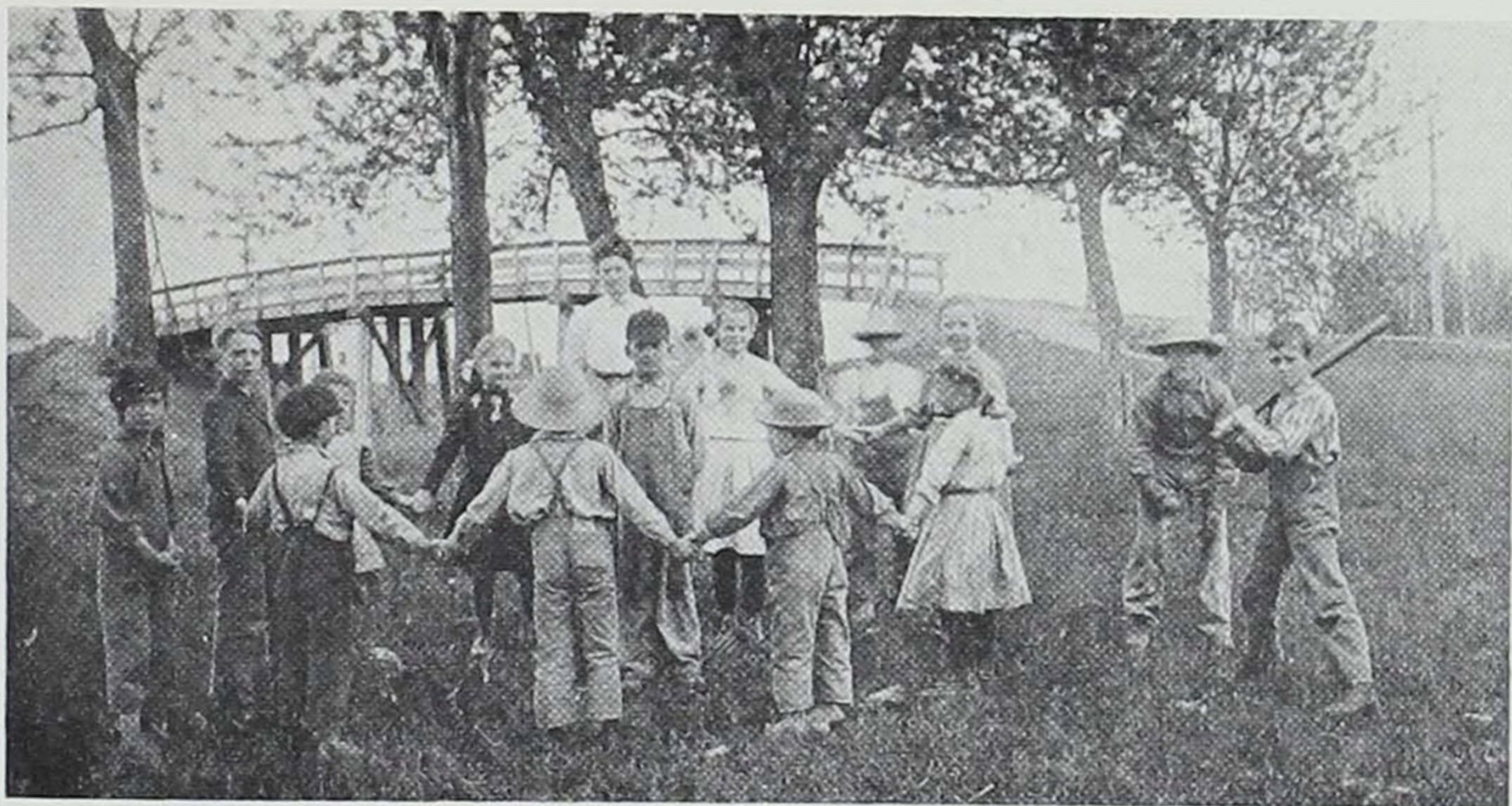
Lucky ones might ride to school in the country. None objected to walking, books and lunch buckets in hand.



The morning flag salute was an impressive ceremony.



How about a game of croquet at recess time?



Teacher supervises a game of "ring-around-a-rosey," but a couple of athletes seem to prefer baseball.

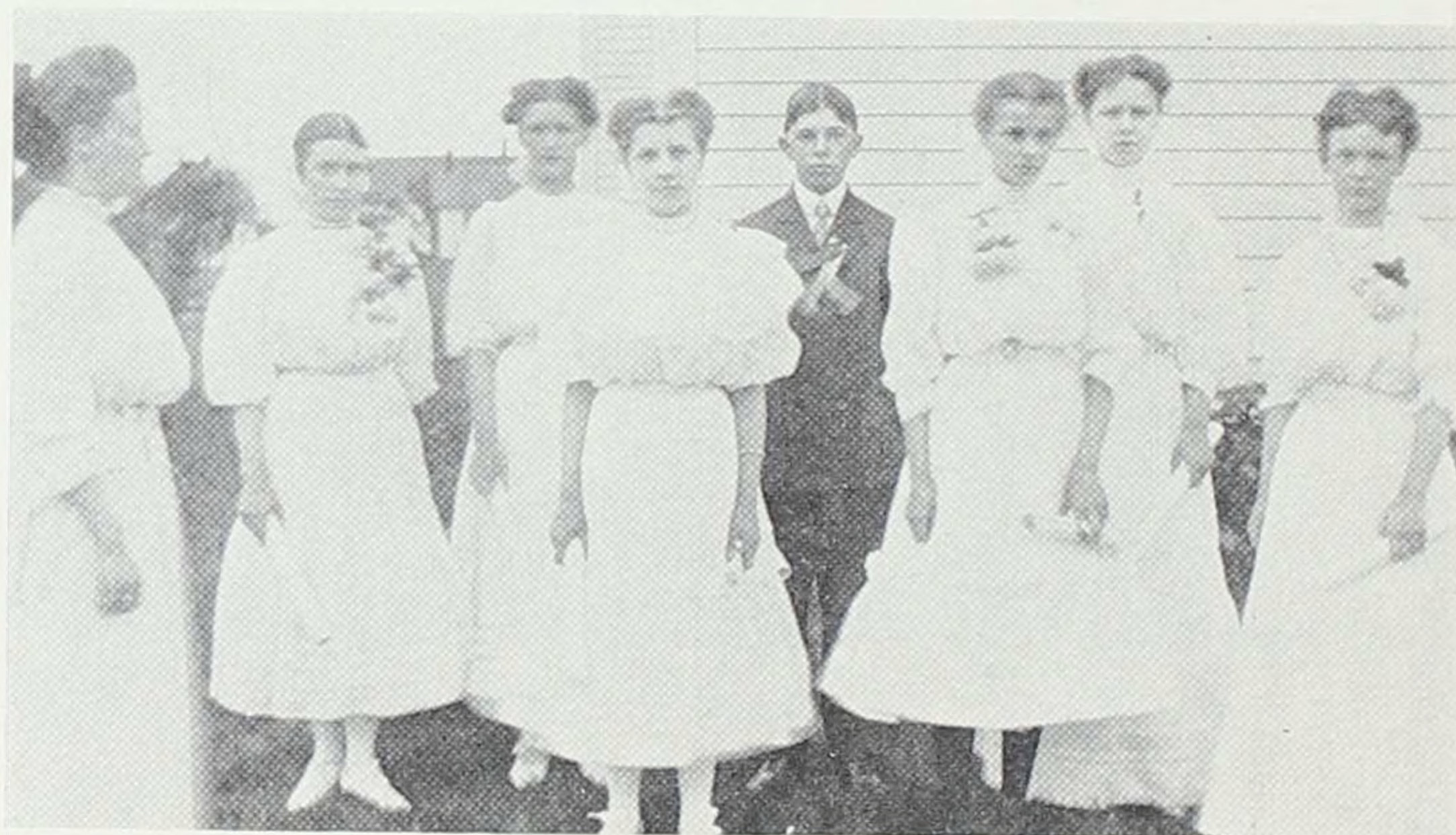


A tug-of-war starts the day right before the school bell rings.



Off for home after a strenuous day with the Three R's.

TEACHER AND GRADUATES

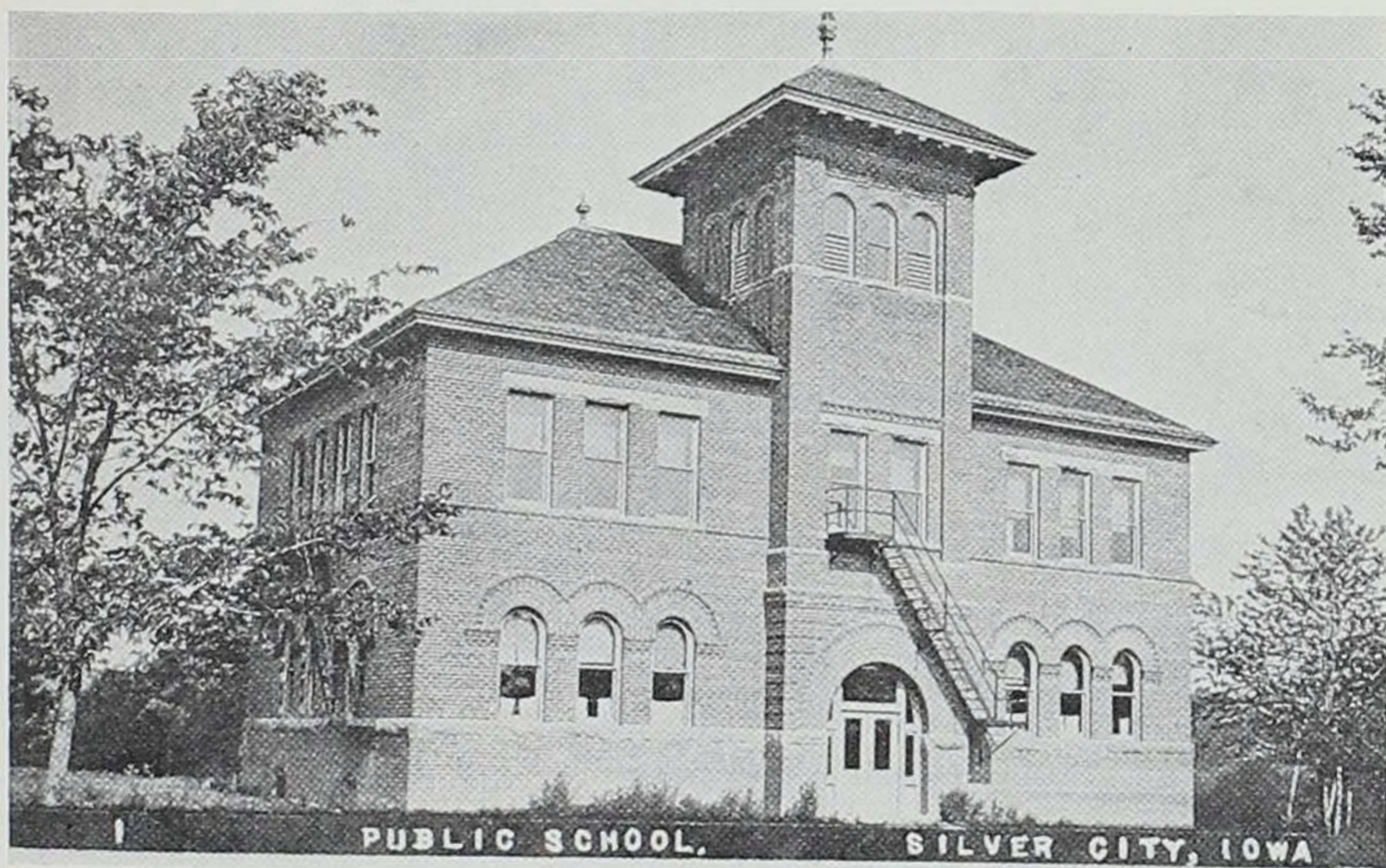


There was just one boy in this eighth grade graduating class at the Page Center School in 1907. Miss Samuelson stands at the left.

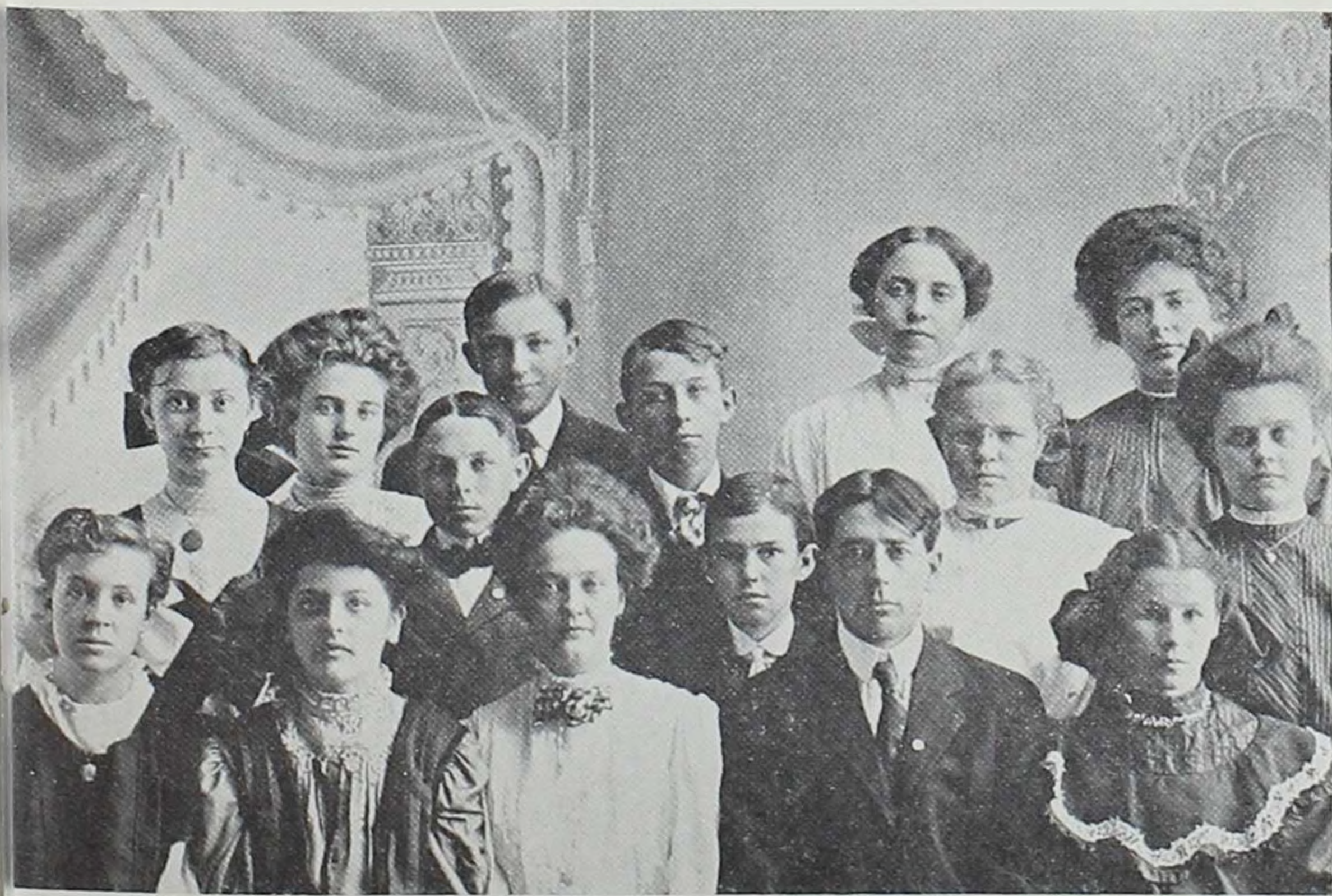


Three graduates had received their diplomas from Silver City High School when this picture was taken. Their assistant principal, Miss Samuelson, is at the right in the front row. Behind her is Supt. J. N. Cunningham.

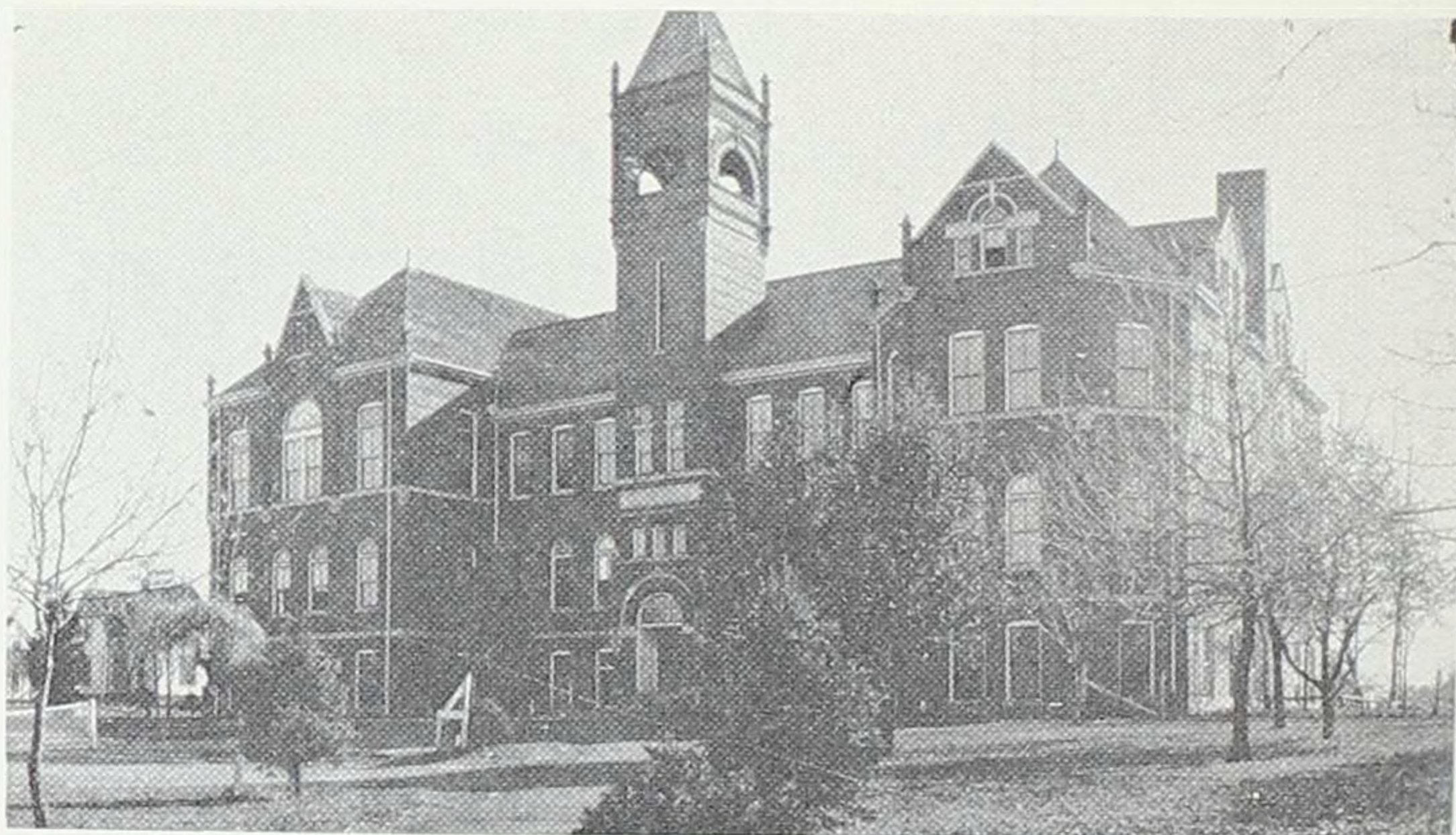
IN SILVER CITY



Agnes Samuelson became assistant principal and teacher of Silver City High School in 1908.



Here is Miss Samuelson, center in the front row, with some of her Silver City High School pupils.



Above is Western Normal College, Shenandoah, from which Agnes Samuelson went out to her first teaching position. She is shown, center, with University of Nebraska co-eds, and below, with her Iowa friend, Jessie Field Shambaugh, at George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tennessee.





With two Silver City friends, Agnes Samuelson, upper left, admires a chic spring chapeau. Below, she poses with members of the Silver City "Fancywork Club," each holding a well-equipped sewing bag.

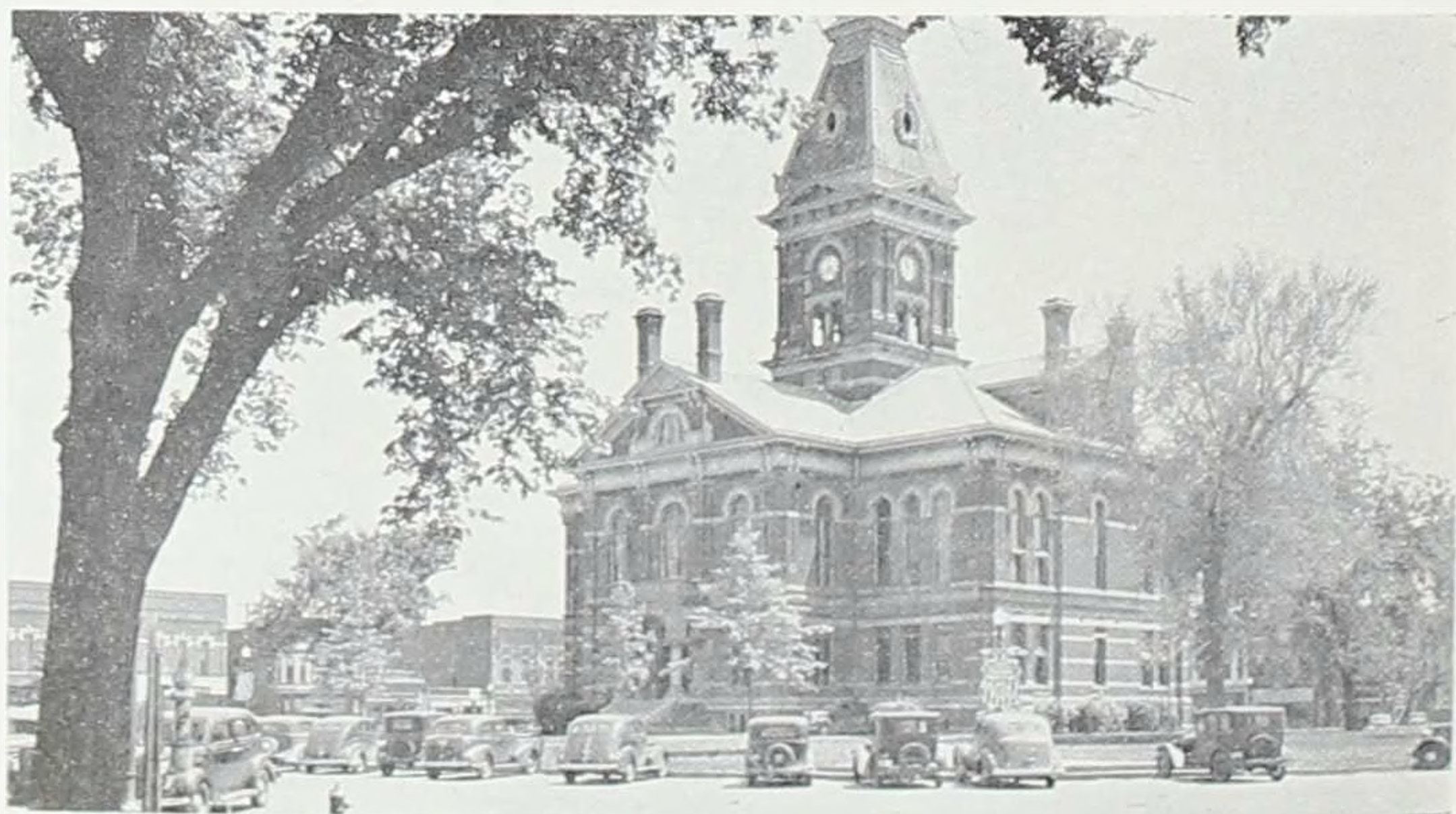




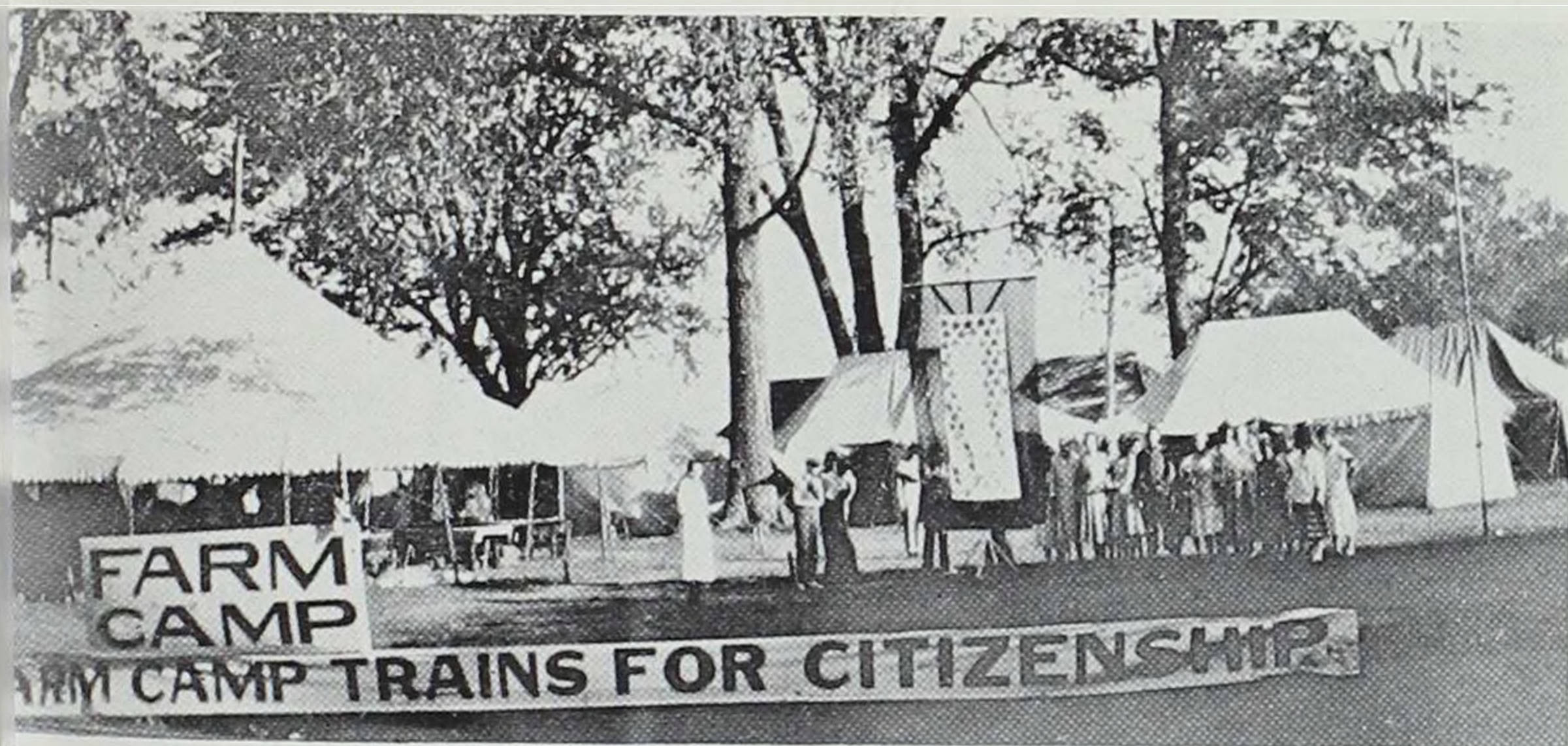
Cheering pupils and townspeople give Miss Samuelson a "chariot ride" after her election as superintendent of Page County schools. Her chariot is a two-wheeled cart, pulled by her admirers through the Clarinda streets.



Entertaining other superintendents at her home.



Page County courthouse, Clarinda, where Agnes Samuelson served as county superintendent of schools for more than eight years.



Agnes Samuelson was director of the Farm Camp, sponsored by the Clarinda Chauqua Committee.



At her suggestion, thirty rural school districts entered floats in the "Education Day" parade at the Farmers' Institute, during Miss Samuelson's Page County superintendency.



Visiting consolidated schools in horse-drawn buses was included in the superintendent's schedule.

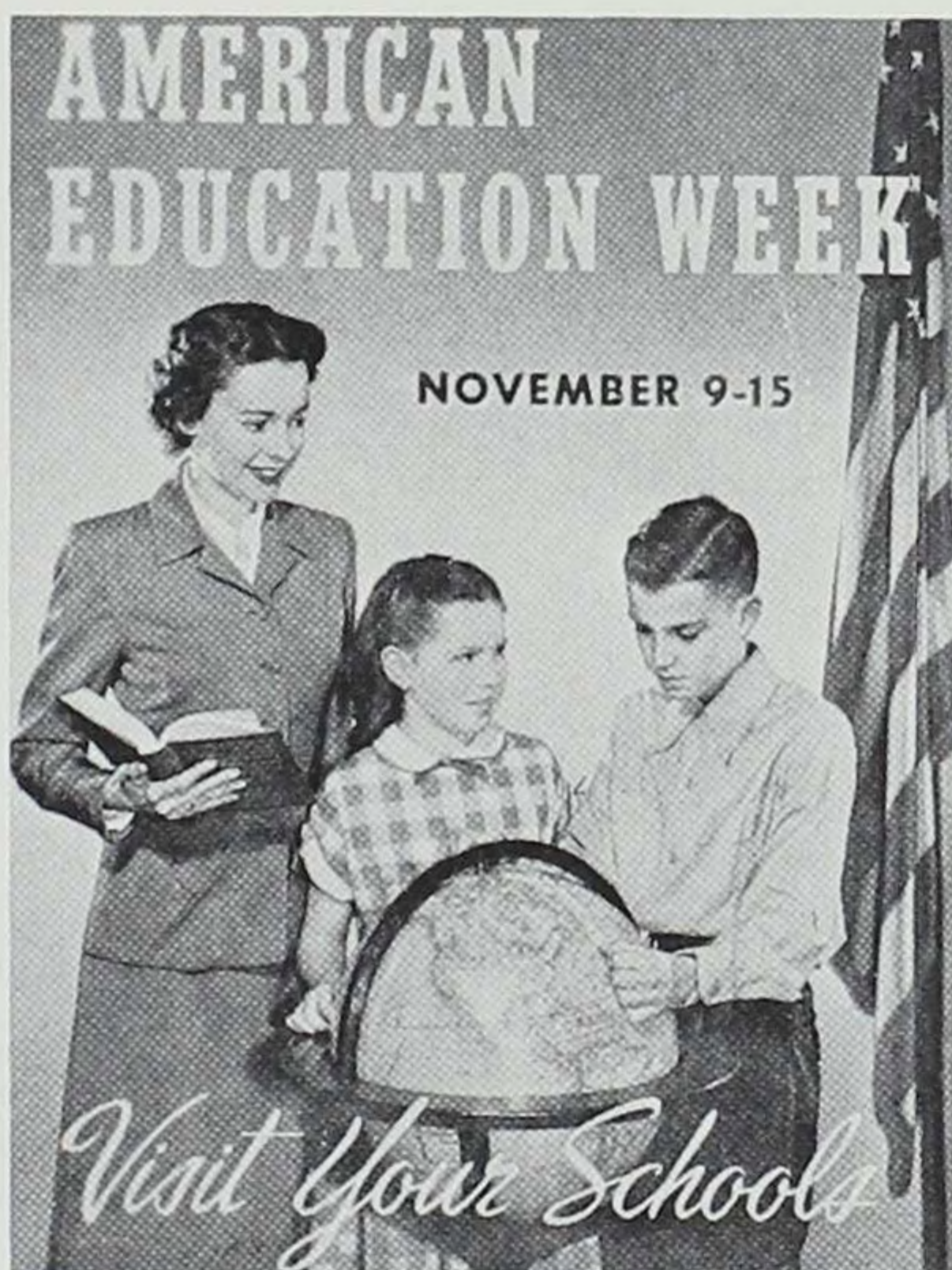


Miss Samuelson, president of the National Education Association, was its envoy to a conference of the World Federation of Education Association in Oxford, England. She is pictured on shipboard at the start of her voyage.

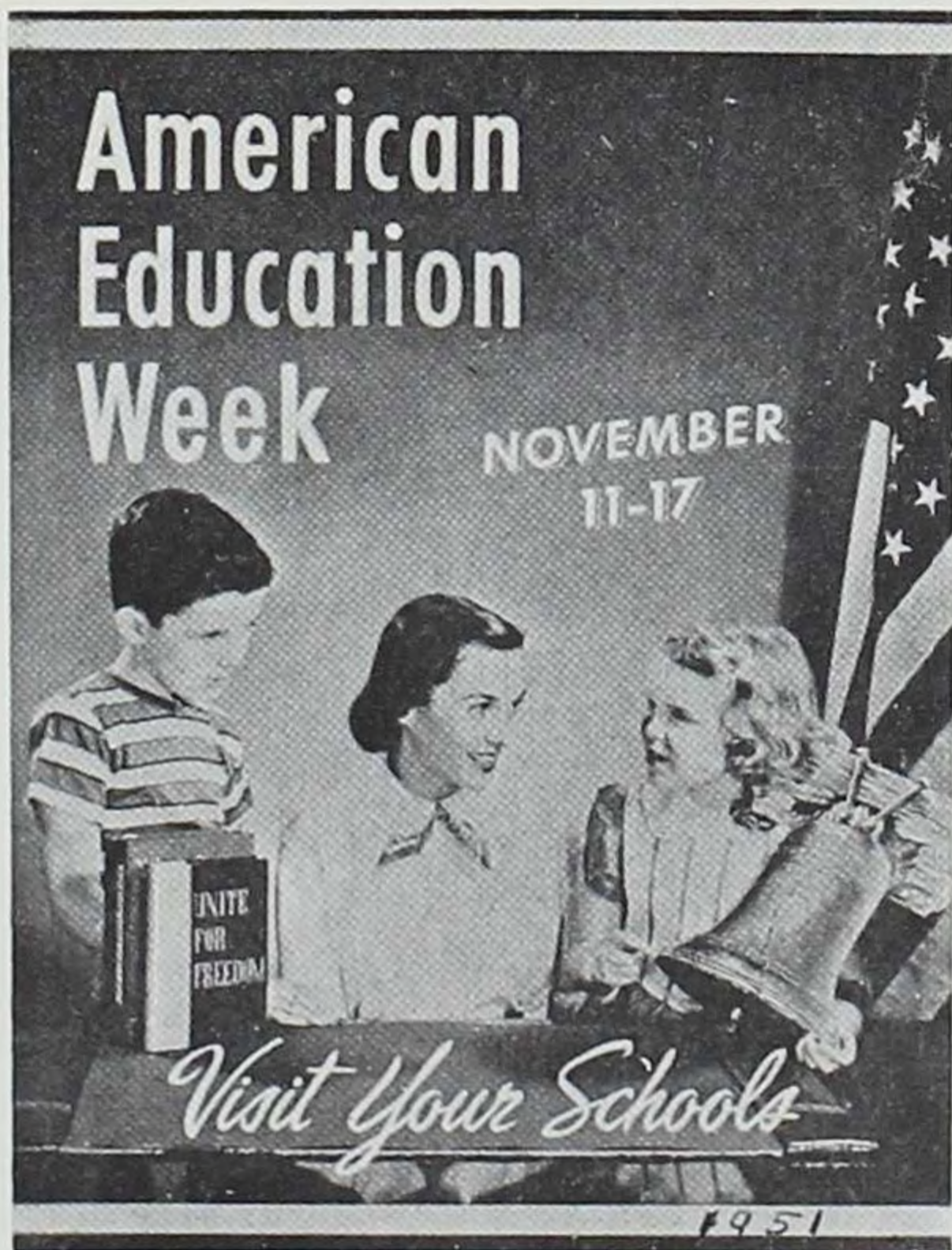


Conferring in Boston with past presidents of the N. E. A. is Miss Samuelson, second from the left, front row. She is the only Iowa woman ever to be named president of this organization.

AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK... November 7-13



AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK... November 5-11, 1950



These are some of the posters planned by Agnes Samuelson for American Education Week during her sojourn with the N. E. A. in Washington, D. C.

BUSY DAYS IN WASHINGTON



Agnes Samuelson, right, confers with R. I. Grisby, acting Commissioner of Education, along with representatives of the General Federation of Women's Clubs and the American Association of University Women.



Packing books for overseas relief are Agnes Samuelson, left, and some of her associates.

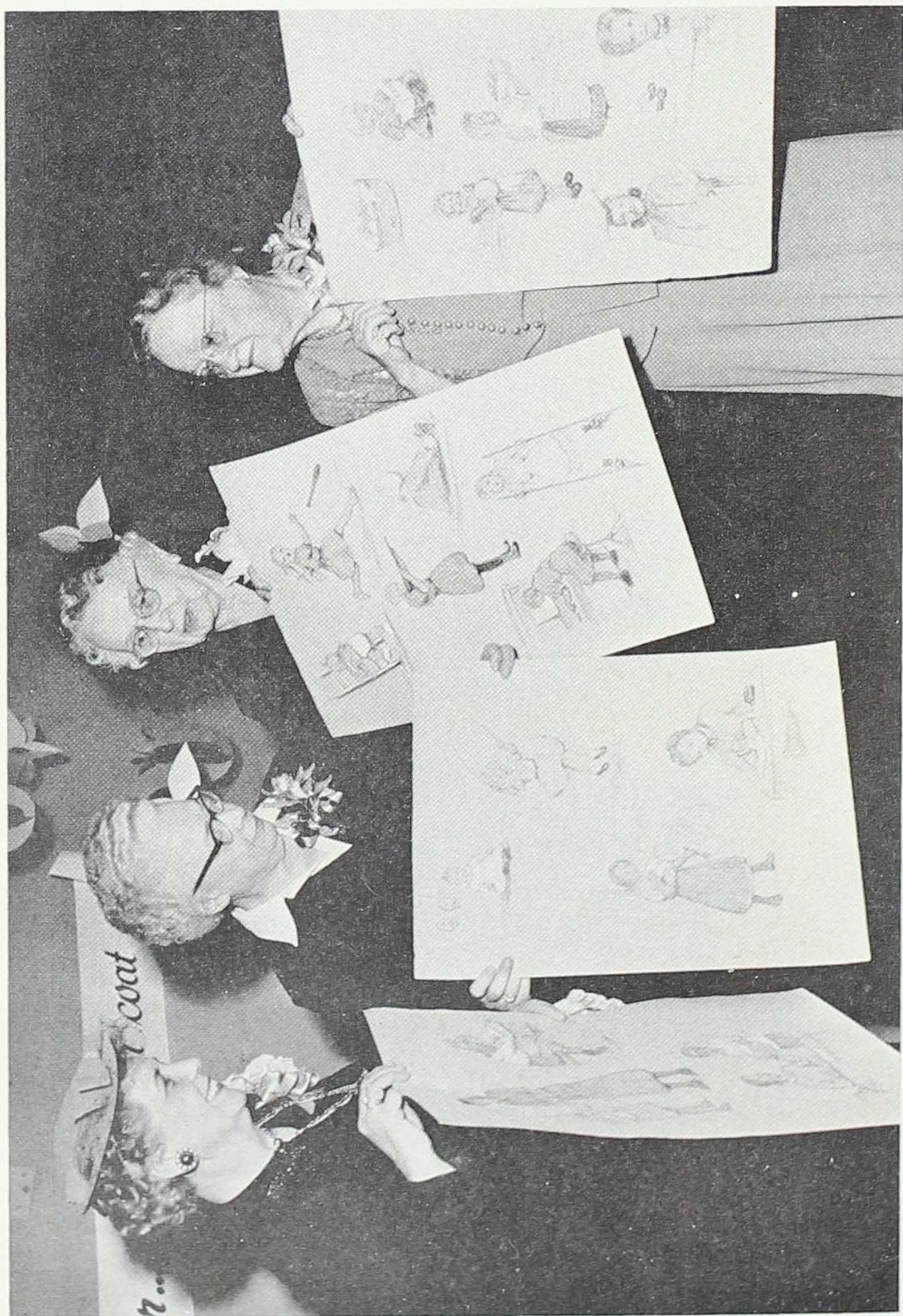
MILESTONES IN A BUSY LIFE



Agnes Samuelson, left, has been named Iowa Superintendent of Public Instruction; center, president of the National Education Association; right, facing new challenges in retirement.



Miss Samuelson receives praise and best wishes from Dr. William G. Carr, executive secretary-elect, N. E. A., and Dr. Willard E. Givens, executive secretary of the organization, upon her retirement from the N. E. A.



Miss Samuelson, right, was honored by the Des Moines Business and Professional Women's Club at a "This is Your Life" program in 1955. Also recognized for achievement were Miss Helen Irwin, Dr. Helen Johnston, and Miss Jessie M. Parker. The posters held by the women illustrate phases of their careers; pictures on Miss Samuelson's include one of a young girl holding a pan of bread, a reminder of her youthful plan for earning school tuition.

The outbreak of World War I found Agnes Samuelson engaged in a variety of community activities. She was a charter member of the Page County Chapter of the American Red Cross. She directed patriotic activities in the schools and spoke at Liberty Loan drives. She recalls marching around the Clarinda square with other hilarious celebrants when news of the armistice was announced.

She became a member of the Women's Auxiliary of the Sergy Post of the American Legion Auxiliary in Clarinda, and later was given an honorary membership in the Ladies Auxiliary of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. She wrote sketches, patriotic plays, and a "Peace on Earth" pageant in which Clarinda citizens and pupils participated. At Christmas time, back in Shenandoah, she helped with the children's program in the church school, which she served as Sunday School superintendent.

Miss Samuelson assisted in the organization of the Page County Y. W. C. A. and was a member of its board for several years. One of her prized possessions is an autographed copy of the American version of the Bible, presented by Helen Gould Shephard in a National Y. W. C. A. program for memorizing certain passages of scripture in the Old and New Testaments.

She was in demand as a speaker at many Iowa and Nebraska gatherings, and wrote many play-

lets for school-community meetings. One of the most elaborate, "Ye Kain't Haul 'Em," was presented at a rural conference at Iowa State Teachers College. County superintendents took part in the production, a satire on the problems faced by the superintendents in connection with the establishment of consolidated schools.

Parents and pupils alike profited when she secured a favorable vote on the adoption of uniform text books for the schools of Page County. Bulletins and lesson helps dealt with such topics as teaching citizenship, teaching patriotism, and teaching manners and morals. When an Iowa law was passed requiring the teaching of home economics, manual training and agriculture in the schools, it was her duty to see that equipment was purchased, and demonstrations held for teachers without training in these subjects.

Among her outstanding achievements as county superintendent were several events which brought the rural schools together on a county level.

There was great fun as well as instructional activity at the Farm Camp, sponsored by the Clarinda Chautauqua committee, with Miss Samuelson as Camp Director. Faculty members from Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts taught courses in home economics, manual training and agriculture. Teachers and other adults were tent leaders. An assembly, chosen by the camp group, governed the daily affairs, much

like the pattern of the Boys' State and Girls' State today.

Another highlight of her Page County superintendency was "Education Day" at the Farmers' Institute, when thirty rural districts entered floats depicting farm and school life. Her association with the farmers in the area always was pleasant. When the Page County Farm Bureau was organized, the preliminary meeting was held in her office, with Miss Samuelson participating in the initial planning.

There are many who still talk about the great "Play Day" — May 11, 1923 — when 2,000 pupils and teachers marched in a parade, led by the Clarinda band, and later participated in a program of track events, folk games, contests, Maypole drills and township dinners. Climax of the program was a flag drill in which 1,800 pupils rhythmically waved their flags as the band played "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean." Old-timers recall that 10,000 people watched these thrilling events. The celebration was a cooperative affair, with Miss Lula E. Sweigard of Iowa State Teachers College in charge of the program, Miss Samuelson serving as general manager, and the Clarinda Community club furnishing the grounds, band, labor, prize ribbons and other services.

It was natural that her understanding of rural schools and people would attract the attention of educators at the college level. So after eight years

and two months' service as superintendent of Page County, she resigned her position to accept the invitation of Prof. I. H. Hart, Director of the Extension Division of Iowa State Teachers College, to become an Extension Professor of Rural Education. Now her work became state wide.

Saying goodbye to her associates was not easy, but the sadness of parting was alleviated by farewell dinners, and the presentation of a silver loving cup from the Clarinda teachers and a gold watch from her Page County colleagues.

From 1923 to 1926 Agnes Samuelson traveled over the State of Iowa, holding conferences, advising teachers, principals and superintendents, conducting teaching demonstrations, and speaking at study center meetings and eighth grade promotion exercises.

Although hers was often a six-day week, she found special satisfaction in bringing help to teachers; securing up-to-date teaching materials; pointing the way to aid the slow learner, the rapid learner and pupils with average ability. Her goal, as always, was toward improvement of instruction for the pupils and more realistic consideration of the status of the teachers.

In this period the rural schools were criticized by those who saw only the imperfections, and were eulogized by others who saw only achievement and whose judgment sometimes was clouded by nostalgic memories. To be overcome by educa-

tional leaders were objections to change; increased costs; transportation difficulties and satisfaction with the status quo. The fact that Iowa was rated first in literacy in the nation led some to believe that the state's schools must be the best.

Agnes Samuelson's concern was for rural education to become an integral part of the total educational program, and that rural educators be given equal status with their urban counterparts. Since that time, much has been gained along these lines, with Miss Samuelson contributing a great deal to the improvements. In this era, much of the school legislation was related to the rural schools. It consisted largely of state aids to consolidated schools; support of extension services; help to normal training high schools, where students were being prepared for teaching in one-room schools, and emergency budgetary assistance to mining camp schools.

Of the ever-changing scene, Miss Samuelson says:

Statesmanship and leadership were imperatives for moving from one type of school organization to another — from the one-room school to the consolidated school and from the consolidated school to the community school. These same qualities will be needed in the establishment of the intermediate school unit of tomorrow — already due. In each period the developments have been made in response to new needs and changing conditions, affecting all aspects of American life. Who can foresee what the space age will bring?

DOROTHY ASHBY POWNALL